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## **Collections to think with: collecting, scholarship and belonging in the R. E. Hart Collection (Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery)**

Jackson Hase and Rebecca Darley

### **Abstract**

Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery has a nationally significant coin collection thanks mainly to two bequests in the early twentieth century. The donation by R. E. Hart, a local industrialist, was made along with all accompanying notes and books. This collection offers unique insights into the habits and aims of Hart as a numismatist, his wider network and the intellectual community of collecting. Understanding Hart's processes of acquisition, and his role as a learned society member and customer of major auction houses, supplies the outlines of a shared endeavour that, in the early twentieth century, shaped social and personal, as well as economic and cultural identities. Collections and collecting like Hart's were also fundamental in creating the resources and structures for numismatic study today, offering a reminder of the importance of preserving and understanding inclusive environments of knowledge curation, as well as context for the collections underpinning much current research.

6930 words

## Introduction

Robert Edward Hart (1878-1946) was an industrialist based in Blackburn, whose wealth was built on the family business of cotton rope manufacturing. Hart's life spanned the peak of industrial activity in the English North West, which declined with the Hart fortune as he neared the end of his life. He was wealthy, educated, and had plenty of time and resources to devote to his interests, which included building collections of a range of artefacts, including coins, manuscripts and early printed books.<sup>i</sup> His collecting thus fits easily within the context of a plethora of other industrialist collectors operating at the turn of the twentieth century. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the social landscape of northwest England came to be dominated by a capitalist elite for whom it was not only common to collect, but also to bequeath generously.<sup>ii</sup> To say that Hart's behaviour fitted contemporary patterns, however, does not obviate examination of either the unique characteristics of Hart's enactment of these habits, or their meaning within his life.

Understanding both illuminates the possible motivations and activities of other collectors now known only through the objects they acquired, and the shapes that such collecting activity has given to modern scholarship. This study deals specifically with Hart's numismatic collections, and is based on preliminary research in the incredibly rich Hart archives held by Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery. These reveal a pattern of collecting that was rooted in local and national networks. Correlating objects and books also demonstrates that Hart collected in constant dialogue with contemporary scholarship. A full study of his collecting habits across multiple artefact types and incorporating personal papers, books, objects and Hart's own labels and record cards will be a work of many years. Nevertheless, initial study provides valuable insights into Hart's collecting habits, his engagement with his collection and his membership of wider communities of scholarship. This in turn emphasises the importance to future numismatic work of a keener focus on collecting histories if non-archaeological collections are to continue to be a central resource for research. In particular, this requires understanding numismatic collections as composite and intellectually crafted assemblages. Furthermore, situating collectors within their wider community illuminates the rich and plural development of numismatics as a scholarly pursuit, and a reminder of the debts that modern academic research owes to multiple contributors and stakeholders.

## Hart's Numismatic Collection Today

Hart's lifetime was, arguably, the golden age for regional museum collections in the UK. During this period it became the norm for local museums and libraries to be founded or primarily filled with the artefacts of wealthy beneficiaries.<sup>iii</sup> Nevertheless, it can be difficult to trace the creation of such collections due to choices about what to donate where, the dispersal of collections subsequently, the conveying of collections to museums without full archival records, or the loss of such records or their context after donation. Moreover, with collecting histories only a quite recent phenomenon in scholarship, and one not yet widely applied within numismatics, an understanding of collections through their history of creation and donation is unusual.<sup>iv</sup> For all of these reasons, the Hart numismatic collection held by Blackburn Museum

and Art Gallery (hereafter BMAG) is of great significance. Numismatics has tended to be explored, published and presented either internally, with its disciplinary structures taken for granted, or to be addressed by non-numismatists whose interest is solely in the objects as evidence for their period of production or deposition, for example in archaeological contexts. This is problematic because, despite the importance of coins in excavation contexts, museum collections remain fundamental to our understanding of the dating and identification of coin evidence, and play a significant role in studies of especially ancient and medieval societies and economies. Just as the study of manuscripts as parts of libraries, bequests and collections has yielded new insights into the transmission of knowledge in the past, so a better understanding of how and why coins survive can only enhance the conclusions that can in turn be drawn from them. As one of the most commonly collected artefact types in early modern and modern European society, coin collections also offer a unique insight into the wider practices which shaped cultural and intellectual activity and brought generated networks that crossed regional, educational and class identities.

Up to now, parts of the Hart numismatic bequest have been included in catalogues or sylloges of specific coin types.<sup>v</sup> Meanwhile, Hart's manuscripts and incunables have recently become the focus of detailed collection studies, which have done much to uncover Hart as a personality and a museum donor, with relevance also for understanding his coin collection.<sup>vi</sup> Such research is possible in large part because Hart's collection was bequeathed *in toto* to the Blackburn Library in 1946, including not only Hart's coins and tickets but also his entire numismatic library, his inventory records and associated notes and correspondence. Even more remarkably, these materials have remained discrete and complete, in spite of the intervening decades and institutional restructuring in the 1970s to disaggregate BMAG and the Library collections.

Hart's numismatic materials remain on the museum site and include around eight thousand coins, still in their six original cabinets. These house, in separate cabinets, Hellenistic, early Roman Republican, Roman imperial, and medieval English coins. A final cabinet contains Roman and British gold and is the only cabinet apparently sorted by Hart on the basis of material. Hart's collection comprises mainly silver and gold in his Hellenistic collection with a greater proportion of copper alloy in his Roman imperial series. The condition of the acquisitions is, in general, very good, with most coins showing little or no wear or mint damage. An apparent bias towards collecting aesthetically fine coins is matched by a similar emphasis on completion of sets. The collection contains, for example, a full run of Roman imperial coins, making it one of very few in the world able to make such a claim.<sup>vii</sup> Hart's collecting also seems to have focussed on beginnings, with the start of various periods of currency (such as Roman struck coinage) being particularly well represented. The collection is also notable for its several hundred duplicates. They do not consistently represent variations in clarity, style, or markings, and they were not differentiated by Hart on the accompanying tags, i.e. each duplicate carries the same ticketed information, except for purchase data when included.

The coins are today kept with their original tickets and in their original cabinet positions unless out on display. Ephemeral aspects of Hart's collection are difficult to be certain of, but traces remain: the sequences within his coin cabinets are indicated by labels on individual coin trays,

and the coins in these trays show consistency with this labelling. For example Hellenistic coinage appears to have been arranged regionally, while Roman imperial coinage was primarily ordered by reign. However, it seems likely that the individual placement of coins within trays has, over the years, been subject to minor change, especially in trays that do not have pre-cut coin slots, but are open with small paper holders for each coin. The BMAG coin collection is on permanent partial display in cabinets dedicated to the history of money, in which items from the Hart bequest are displayed alongside coins from other sources. Recently and in association with wider interest in Hart as a collector, parts of his numismatic collection have also been exhibited in the context of Hart's life (see fig. 1).

**Fig. 1: HERE**

### **Mechanisms of Collecting**

The evidence of both Hart's collections and the papers relating to them suggests that he was an adept collector who used a network of connections to buy coins both second-hand after auctions and through third parties.<sup>viii</sup> Although there is little doubt that Hart bought coins personally, just as he did manuscripts, he also had standing deals with auction houses to purchase coins for him for an agreed commission.<sup>ix</sup> Most of Hart's coin tickets name auction houses for provenance, most commonly the major UK coin dealers, Baldwin, Spink and Glendining, though also smaller houses such as Daniel, Weight, Lincoln, and Verity. It is also possible that Hart practiced buying coins second-hand from English auction houses which he knew purchased abroad. This is suggested by the fact that many of the auction catalogues in Hart's library that are not in English are annotated with the sums for which each coin sold, irregular tick marks next to specific coins, and sometimes the names of the people or companies that bought the coins. Alongside Hart's occasional addition of hand-written translations into his French books and the fact that a good percentage of his coins are labeled as coming from English sellers, the annotated European auction catalogues may indicate that Hart preferred waiting for coins to come into the hands of English sellers before buying them.

Nevertheless, his inventory of certain parts of his coin collection lists European auction houses too, including Ganz, Steinstahl, Duprez, Selmann and Ritzos, as regular sources of material. It is not clear whether this reflects Hart's knowledge of the original purchase location of coins he acquired through British dealers or his own purchasing network on the continent. One obituary recorded that for nine years between graduation and taking over full management of the family business in 1908, Hart 'was engaged in extensive travel', however these seem from Hart's acquisition lists to have been quieter years for coin purchases than those which followed, probably due to increased access to financial resources from 1908 onwards.<sup>x</sup> Purchases of coins in Florence in the summer of 1899 and Palermo and Tunisia in that of 1901 indicate that Hart might have made opportunistic purchases when abroad for other reasons but proxy buying from the 1910s onwards is a better explanation for substantial additions to his Hellenistic and Roman collections.

**Fig. 2: HERE**

A numismatic library must have been critical to Hart's purchasing style. In commissioning third parties, Hart had to articulate his interests in terms that would be shared and understood by his buyers, most easily achieved through shared reference works. Hart also had to keep track of a complex web of purchases, including those made by others. Evidence for this process can be found in Hart's numismatic books, indicating that they were necessary for him to record what he bought, what he was intending to buy, or what he already owned, though they did not serve as a systematic hand-list. For example, within Hart's collection there are four early struck *sextantes* of the same type, which depicts Hermes and the prow of a ship.<sup>xi</sup> This type is also listed in one of Hart's catalogues, *Description historique et chronologique des monnaies de la République Romaine vulgairement appelées monnaies consulaires*, and annotated with three checkmarks.<sup>xii</sup> This book was published in 1885 and Hart tended to buy new books. Since one of the four copies of this type is labelled '1917', it is therefore likely that Hart marked his three copies at some point before this point and only later made the final purchase.<sup>xiii</sup> This hints at the apparently haphazard, this article argues, intellectually driven, relationship between Hart's numismatic library and his collection.

While Hart clearly marked his books in dialogue with his collection, when this behaviour is considered across his whole numismatic library, ticks and similar marks are too sparse to reflect all of what was actually in Hart's collection. Moreover, books central to the organisation of the collection are often hardly marked at all. For example, Sydenham's catalogue of *aes grave*, discussed below, was evidently a central work for Hart in arranging and understanding his collection of this coin series yet it is completely unmarked.<sup>xiv</sup> All this indicates that the three ticks next to the Hermes *sextantes* were made for a practical, perhaps time-specific, purpose rather than 'keeping track' of coins owned. Thus, as they refer to coins actually in the collection, they could have had three possible uses: Hart could have made them before leaving for an auction so that he knew he already had them, he could have made them at an auction to record what coins he was buying, or it could have been for another person buying coins on his behalf to know what he had. In any case, it is clear that Hart's numismatic library served actively in his method of acquisition, but did not seem to prevent, and was not intended to prevent duplicate purchases. One explanation for this is simply that Hart's methods of collecting outlined above would have made it hard for Hart to avoid duplication, with potentially several agents buying or holding coins for him simultaneously. That such duplicate purchases may have been intentional, or at least welcome, is a possibility discussed in more detail later.

The centrality of Hart's numismatic library to his collecting habits thus reveals a perpetual conversation between Hart, his numismatic library and the wider community which shared published reference points, that was always more complicated than using books to provide a set for the collector to complete. Coins had been collected for centuries and were embedded in

and used to create historical narrative.<sup>xv</sup> Collecting them without some engagement with this would hardly be possible, however throughout his life Hart seems to have used his coin collection as a resource with which to think actively, and, as far as possible, in an up-to-date way about the coins themselves and about new research into their historical meaning.

### **Collections to think with, collecting to think**

The possession of Hart's notes, as well as clues gleaned from oral interviews with his former house-keeper recorded in the 1970s, clearly indicate that for Hart his coin collection was a life-long resource with which to think. In the words of his housekeeper, 'in the evenings, Mr Hart would read his books or look at his coins'.<sup>xvi</sup> This link between books and coins is hard-wired into the structure and layout of the collection as preserved. In particular, the trays are consistently organized around reference books that Hart owned; this is seen very clearly in his trays of *aes grave*, or early Roman Republican types, where the coins are ordered based on their reference in Edward A. Sydenham's *Aes Grave* catalogue.<sup>xvii</sup> Notably, this mode of organization trumped practical considerations, resulting in small coins occupying large slots and vice versa, and only deviated when a better reference existed in a different catalogue, such as Cohen, in which case chronological order, as defined by Cohen and apparently superior research, was maintained.<sup>xviii</sup> This indicates that Hart's motivation in arranging his coins was correctness as he understood it from engagement with contemporary literature, rather than either completeness or consistency with respect to one catalogue.<sup>xix</sup>

Exploring Hart's purchases further, arrangement of coins and efforts to understand them in dialogue with the most up-to-date published material begin to reveal Hart's interests and motivations as a numismatist and a collector more broadly. Here, the terms 'interests' and 'motivations' are used to denote two different aspects of Hart's collecting, the latter being his overall purpose and philosophy of collecting and the former being the coins or groups that caught his interest sufficiently to have this collecting philosophy applied to them, such as Hellenistic or Roman Republican coins. Thus, to ask how Hart's interests were formed is essentially to ask how Hart engaged with numismatics and ideas about coins, and the answer revealed by his collection is that Hart's collecting was rooted in his numismatic library, rather than the library following on from the coins.

An overview of the numismatic library is at this point helpful. Concerning the collection as a whole, Hart evidently bought new books for the sake of having up to date information; he did not purchase antiquarian numismatic works, and most publications date from the late 1880s into the twentieth century when Hart was active. Furthermore his books, while in very good condition, show signs of being used intimately; bookmarks, checkmarks, translations of Greek and French, corrections of textual errors, page number references, and marginalia are found lightly but consistently throughout. Hart's books can be grouped into five broad categories: coin collecting handbooks; issues of *The Numismatic Chronicle* and the *Numismatic Circular*; auction catalogues; reference catalogues of particular coin series; and research publications synthesising new work on specific series or questions in numismatics. In the last category are many interpretive and analytical books addressing historical and art-historical aspects of numismatic study, such as *The Fauna and Flora on the Coin-Types of Ancient Rome*.<sup>xx</sup> Hart's

handlist of books, including his numismatic items reveals purchases related to Hellenistic and medieval English coinage concentrated in the period c. 1880-1910, giving way to a Roman focus from the 1910s onwards, and with purchases of handbooks and occasional general interest items throughout his lifetime. In all areas of his collection, however, Hart would buy major new catalogues when they appeared.<sup>xxi</sup> Hart had no training or educational background in history, classics or archaeology. He had read engineering at Cambridge and discontinued his formal education immediately after his graduation with an MA in Mechanical Engineering in 1899. Nevertheless, his numismatic library was used intensely, kept up to date, and expanded into different aspects of numismatics, indicating that it, rather than prior learning, constituted the key basis for Hart's specific interests and knowledge. It is a hypothesis amply borne out by the formation of the coin collection itself.

Apart from the physical arrangement of the coins in cabinets according to contemporary literature, it is also clear to see that Hart's timeline of collecting, and sometimes special interest collections away from his main Greek and Roman set, were informed by numismatic books and periodicals. Thus, as *The Numismatic Chronicle* and other works emphasized certain groups of coins over others in the 1890s, such as Greek silver, this bias of interest was passed along to Hart, with the two core interests of contemporary scholarship – Hellenistic precious metal and Roman imperial series – eventually becoming the core of his collection.<sup>xxii</sup> His small collection of medieval European coins can perhaps also be related to catalogues of European medieval coinage, which began to emerge in the early twentieth century, and some of which Hart purchased, apparently hot off the press.<sup>xxiii</sup>

The many duplicates in Hart's collections are also an indication of intellectual engagement. Whether acquisition of duplicates was purely pragmatic, or intentional, they were not disposed of by Hart, and it is evident that possession of duplicates allowed him to apply and expand the numismatic knowledge gained from reading. Whereas duplicates make no sense in a collection based on aesthetics or set collection, the study of numismatics as a branch of monetary history often requires coins of the same type or series as a basis for analysis. In one of Hart's books, for example, there is a scrap piece of paper stuck between the pages on which Hart attempted to chart the relationship between ancient denominations and weight standards by drawing these two groups along separate axes, using weights apparently derived from examples in his collection.<sup>xxiv</sup> While this does not appear to have rendered any results, it demonstrates participation in one of the key debates in numismatic study: the relationship between coin weights and type and value.

## **Communities of belonging**

This is a motivation that should not come as a surprise when one situates Hart in the context of his wider collecting community. His relationship with auction houses at the centre of the coin collecting world in the UK, as well as in Europe (though not visibly in the US) have already been alluded to, but the other most obvious indicator of his commitment to wider networks of learning is his relationship with the Royal Numismatic Society (hereafter RNS). The Numismatic Society, to become 'Royal' in 1904, was founded in 1836 as an offshoot of other 'gentlemanly'



societies of the time.<sup>xxv</sup> Its Society journal, *The Numismatic Chronicle*, had established itself by the late nineteenth century as one of the most prestigious venues for new numismatic research.<sup>xxvi</sup> Around the same time as he became interested in collecting coins in the 1890s, Hart subscribed to *The Numismatic Chronicle* and also appears to have purchased some issues retroactively, based on a short run of copies from the 1880s, preserved in perfect condition and in identical, post-publication leather bindings. On November 16, 1916, Hart was elected a Fellow of the Society under the presidency of Sir Arthur Evans.<sup>xxvii</sup> While this connection to Evans is obviously superficial, it nevertheless speaks to the state of numismatics at the time of Hart's involvement; Evans was a collector and scholar whose collection was explicitly intended to function as a resource for historical scholarship - a goal he promoted through his presidency of the RNS.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Hart was a consistent, if quiet, member of the RNS until his death. While he never published anything in the *Numismatic Chronicle*, he kept his semi-personalized correspondences with the Society, including, for example, apologies for a late subscription payment when Hart must already have been suffering symptoms of the illness which would kill him less than two years later. His frequent visits to London and the proximity, in terms of physical premises and personnel, of the RNS, to some of Hart's favourite London dealerships, including Spink and Glendining, make it at least possible, and indeed likely, that he kept up an intermittent attendance at meetings. He also attended the centenary dinner of the society in 1936.<sup>xxix</sup> Thus, the state of numismatics in Hart's world was that of the Royal Numismatic Society at the time: the beginnings of the scholarly pursuit of numismatics in a community of dealers, collectors and the growing and professionalising academic fraternity.

Hart's engagement with the development of the identity of numismatics as a historical discipline was not limited to the RNS alone, however. A rare and remarkable find among Hart's papers is his programme and associated paraphernalia related to the International Numismatic Congress, which held its 8th meeting in 1936 in London. The Congress had been initiated in 1891 and continues to take place roughly every five years in a range of international venues, including London twice, in 1936 and in 1986. The 1936 gathering would, therefore, have been a significant moment for the wider UK numismatic community, evidenced by a reception held for attendees at St James' Palace. From Hart's annotated programme a uniquely personal insight emerges into how Hart encountered this event, and through it, his positioning of himself within the wider numismatic world. It is possible, for example, to see how Hart organised his time at the congress, which papers he was interested in and which he was not. He avoided German, in which he seems to have had no training or experience. In his library, especially on Hellenistic coins, he occasionally attempted to grapple with French, but he chose not to attend any francophone papers at the Congress, strengthening the suspicion gathered from his books that Hart's school-book French was good enough to have a go, but not something he felt confident of. A sense of Hart's networks also comes through from the names of attendees he marked in the list of participants. They came from the North West, London, and Cambridge, the same geographical foci as his biography would imply and his purchasing habits reinforce. Numismatics and collecting gave Hart several communities of belonging.

**Fig. 3: HERE**

Thus, on the one hand one gains an impression of Hart's interaction with a large international community which defined itself through solidarities of interest. It marked membership by what one collected and read, and was focussed within the UK, as it is today, in London. On the other hand we have a good impression from Hart's own notes and tickets of his solitary pursuit of the preconditions of membership in that community: reading, collecting, sorting and arranging - something any scholar or collector will recognise. In Hart's papers from the Congress we also have hints at a layer in between. One letter stands out from a Mr Bagnall of Shipley, just outside Bradford, whom Hart had clearly met at the Congress. Bagnall had taken a photograph of himself, Hart and another collector from Manchester at the London gathering and then sent a copy to Hart (not yet located, if it survives, in the Hart papers). In it he also asked Hart if he could send the name of the man from Manchester so that he too might receive a copy, and thanked Hart for his invitation to Bagnall to view Hart's medieval collection on a convenient week day. Bagnall was not a member of the RNS, but rather a representative of a more regional level of interest. Hart thus takes on a role hitherto unseen, as a human interface in horizontal and vertical networks, linking the local, national and international. It is a role also visible in the talks Hart occasionally organised for local people in Blackburn about his coin collection.

It is this social element of Hart's collecting which perhaps speaks most loudly through his remaining papers and objects. Hart collected to specific interests, and thought in the vein of contemporary numismatic research, through and with the publications of his peers, as well as through face-to-face meetings. The process not just of collecting but of learning through and with his collections, made Hart a member of a community which was in the process of constituting itself across time and space, most clearly celebrated in the International Numismatic Congress and its dinner toast 'to the pious founders', but persistently redrawn in engagement with the RNS, visits to Spink or Baldwins and meetings with figures like Bagnall.

**Collections history, numismatics and the infrastructure of monetary history**

A micro-study of R. E. Hart likely has many points of similarity with the lives of other private collectors who donated their coin cabinets to museums across Britain, but it can be drawn in greater detail than many and this detail is vital to continued numismatic study. Coins from excavation contexts are often considered, especially in archaeological literature, to be the gold standard for understanding monetary and economic history.<sup>xxx</sup> It is indeed possible to ask certain questions of coins from excavations that are specific to their find context. Nevertheless, numismatic research continues to rely on museum collections equally heavily. From metallurgic testing, to building up larger and more comprehensive catalogues that are in turn necessary for identifying archaeological finds, to studying micro-markings and modifications, it is the museum environment which provides the resources for study, in terms both of well-preserved examples and stable, long-term maintenance of material.<sup>xxxi</sup> The tendency for numismatics to sideline collections history is therefore not unproblematic. It creates the impression of catalogues that are neutral, or comprehensive, within the framework of a survival history that is assumed to be

lacunose but, by default, random: more discoveries will make the picture better and more detailed, and what survives offers the best route possible to understanding what was. It is a chain of assumption that has been thoroughly discredited for other artefact types, from manuscripts and photographs to paintings and household utensils.<sup>xxxii</sup> However, the coin cabinet is apparently neither archive nor store-room.

The strong sense of a community of interest in numismatics with its own terminology, publication venues, habits and social networks is in this respect both a strength and weakness.<sup>xxxiii</sup> A focus on conventions of practice and a shared understanding of what the important questions are aids mutual comprehension and participation at varying levels of intensity by a global membership, but the result is that what survives does so without due consideration of its canonical construction, or the facets of the past this may leave obscure. This is most visible in the case of coin series which have a shorter or more niche collecting history and in which biases are easier to identify and explain. For example, the coinage of the Sasanian Empire has received significant attention only in the second half of the twentieth century and by a limited number of scholars. Initial interest focussed on collecting precious metal coins, creating a skewed understanding of the Sasanian monetary economy that is only now being forced to integrate the evidence of copper coins, that are increasingly recognisable from archaeological excavation and in turn on the market.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The biases built into the vast and disjointed resource that is Roman coin collections in private and public hands, physical and surviving in publication only, will be far harder to unpick. Engaging with numismatic collections across time and space provides the only means to understand the huge volume of coin evidence in museums today as a resource curated and constructed over centuries, rather than as something imperfectly but impartially reflecting the pasts that produced it. It is perhaps ironic that this effort is currently most clearly visible in a stakeholder community that is neither fully a part of traditional numismatic circles nor widely embraced within the academy: that of metal detecting.<sup>xxxv</sup> This also reflects the need to foreground at all times when undertaking numismatic research that coin collecting has a centuries-long, socially diverse and pluricentric history.

## Conclusion

Hart, an almost exclusively anglophone amateur who never tried to publish a numismatic article, had a genuine interest in the intellectual study of coins which motivated his collecting. His books served a practical purpose in his method of acquisition, which involved second-hand and third-party purchases, but they also created and modified frameworks within which Hart was able to understand and interrogate his collection. Driving all of Hart's collecting practices was the want to engage with coins on an intellectual level: he was informed by cutting-edge publications, and participated actively in a wider community of collectors, dealers and scholars at a time when numismatics in the UK was beginning to assert itself, through publication and the application of historical methods to coin evidence as a sub-discipline in a rapidly professionalizing academic environment.

To understand Hart's collecting and his identity as a collector provides insight into the social role of learned societies and auction houses in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century and, into regional and national networks. It also provides a starting point for actively and consciously re-situating numismatic evidence within a history of long-term curation. Finally, however, a history of Hart and his numismatic collection is useful for reflecting on present practices, and the evolving, sometimes troubled, relationship between scholarship and collecting. Learned societies today provide arguably the only meaningful interface between collectors, dealers, museum curators and university academics with numismatic interests. The increasing professionalisation and development of very specific cycles of activity within university research communities, as well as difficult and important, but crucially unresolved, questions about the legitimate and illegitimate movement of historical objects as items of desire, all play a role in effacing or poisoning connections between different ways of interacting with the material of the past, thereby obscuring still further the links between museum collections as resources for historical research and the impact of their patterns of construction.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Despite these growing boundaries, today's conversations and disciplinary solidarities are constructed out of the same traditions and social impulses that created Hart's collection, and largely derive from the particular circumstances of the decades in which he collected. The world of numismatics remains one in which, uncommonly, lines of meaningful communication and mutual respect – including shared conference billings, and publications, as well as social spaces – remain open between the different stakeholders that also shaped Hart's world.<sup>xxxvii</sup> In part this is a consequence of shared stereotypes, which mark numismatics, whether done in the university library or the auction house archive. It is a field often represented as strange, filled with cryptic tickets and abbreviations, short-sighted peering, and lonely nights sorting coins. It certainly has its specific language and habits, as does any field, and every community. But it is this community which continues to make it distinctive as a realm of endeavour, and one of particular interest within collecting histories. Exploring Hart's collection, and through it, his life as a collector, opens up new ways to analyse the huge legacy of coin collections that survive today, but also helps to uncover and maintain the connections that bind academic research in university settings and other modes of intellectual endeavour.

Today's scholarly discussions must inevitably work with and deepen the conversations which began much earlier, but which face a continuing choice about who to include. It may be salutary to remember that, during his lifetime, Robert Edward Hart was a listener, much more than a participant, in the conversations that remain part of the historiography of monetary history. As a listener, however, he was part of an audience which gave such discussions – on paper or in person – purpose and sustenance. It was also as a listener that he derived the conviction to donate his collection, its objects and supporting scholarly apparatus, to 'his native town' in the hope that it would continue to play a role in the enrichment of the many communities in which he had participated, local and national, scholarly and public. In using his and other such public collections in the production of academic research, then, it is both methodologically and ethically imperative to consider his contribution, representative of the thousands of learned members who have quietly and privately built the architecture within

which modern monetary history occurs, as much as the contribution of those whose names, then as now, are associated with the production of knowledge from such resources.

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<sup>i</sup> Cynthia Johnston, *Mr. Hart Wasn't Odd At All: Memories of Blackburn's Most Worthy Citizen Robert Edward Hart*, University of London's Institute of English Studies, podcast audio, 2016, <https://blackburnmuseum.org.uk/collections/re-hart-blackburns-worthy-citizen-podcast/>.

<sup>ii</sup> Frank Herrmann, 'Collecting Then and Now: The English and Some Other Collectors', *Journal of the History of Collections* 21.2 (March 2009), pp. 263–264.

<sup>iii</sup> Herrmann, op. cit. (note 2), pp. 263–264.

<sup>iv</sup> For example, neither the *Numismatic Chronicle* nor the *Revue Numismatique* include articles based on collecting histories and catalogue publications rarely include substantial discussion of how, when and why collections were constructed. A salient exception is the series *Medieval European Coinage*, and especially those volumes co-authored by Philip Grierson. This is likely reflective of Grierson's own identity, now vanishingly rare, as both a salaried member of the academic community and a coin collector. See, for example, Crusafont, Miquel, Balaguer, Anna M., and Philip Grierson, *Medieval European Coinage, Vol. 6: The Iberian Peninsula, with a Catalogue of the Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge* (Cambridge, 2013). Grierson's focus on collecting history contrasts with a standard academic approach to coin collections, which is often focussed on the objects entirely as evidence for their context of production, and which interrogates collecting history only insofar as it can, or more usually cannot, recover an archaeological provenance for coins. By contrast, Grierson's identity as collector clearly foregrounded for him the significance of contemporary networks in shaping what was available, to whom, and when. The tendency for histories of scholarship to emphasize the content of study over the context in which study has taken place is perceivable in other fields, especially in those related to Classics. While this approach can produce detailed accounts of the strategies and assertions within a field, it can also minimize the factors that condition and situate study. In the case of numismatics, this 'internalist' approach has overlooked collectors, collections, and the paths by which numismatic materials and knowledge moved. By concentrating on Hart, his collection, and his community, this article employs a more 'externalist' approach. For more on the 'internalist-externalist' duality and its effects in other fields, see C. R. Ligota and J. –L. Quantin, 'Introduction' in C. R. Ligota and J. –L. Quantin (eds.) *History of Scholarship: A Selection of Papers from the Seminar on the History of Scholarship Held Annually at the Warburg Institute* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 10–13.

<sup>v</sup> James Booth, 1997. *Northern Museums: Ancient British, Anglo-Saxon, Norman and Plantagenet Coins to 1279*. Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles 48 (London, 1997); Keith Sugden (ed.), *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum (Vol VIII), The Hart Collection Blackburn Museum* (Oxford, 1989).

<sup>vi</sup> Johnston, op. cit. (note 1).

<sup>vii</sup> Rosie Clarke, 'Cotton to Gold: Extraordinary Collections of the Industrial North West Illuminate Two Temple Place', *Culture24*, March 10, 2015.

<sup>viii</sup> Thanks for this suggestion go to Dr Courtney Konshuh, pers. comm. to the first author, June 16, 2017.

<sup>ix</sup> A letter from A. H. Baldwin and Sons, Ltd. to R. E. Hart, 15 September 1938, found within *Catalogue de monnaies romaines contenant la célèbre collection d'un diplomate étranger depuis longtemps décédé* (Genève, 1938), testifies to this practice, with Baldwin's offering 5% commission on any purchases made for him at the auction detailed in the volume.

<sup>x</sup> *Proceedings of the Institution of Mechanical Engineering*, 156 (1947), p. 376, available online via Grace's Guide to British Industrial History, [https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Robert\\_Edward\\_Hart#cite\\_note-1](https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Robert_Edward_Hart#cite_note-1), accessed 18/12/2018.

<sup>xi</sup> BMAG, The Hart Collection, Coins 1348, 1349, 1350, and 1351.

<sup>xii</sup> Ernest Babelon, *Description historique et chronologique des monnaies de la République Romaine vulgairement appelées monnaies consulaires* (Paris, 1885).

<sup>xiii</sup> BMAG, The Hart Collection, Coin 1349.

<sup>xiv</sup> Edward A. Sydenham, *Aes Grave A Study of the Cast Coinages of Rome and Central Italy* (London, 1926).

<sup>xv</sup> Michael H. Crawford, C. R. Ligota and J. B. Trapp (eds.), *Medals and Coins from Budé to Mommsen* (London, 1990).

<sup>xvi</sup> BMAG, an interview with R. E. Hart's housekeeper, recorded 1973.

<sup>xvii</sup> BMAG, The Hart Collection, Cabinet 3.

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- xviii Henry Cohen, *Description Generale Des Monnaies de La Republique Romaine* (Paris, 1857).
- xix BMAG, The Hart Collection, Cabinet 3, Tray 2.
- xx Francesco Gnechi, *The Fauna and Flora on the Coin-Types of Ancient Rome* (London, 1919).
- xxi Thanks to Cynthia Johnston for providing a transcript of Hart's handlist of books as donated to BMAG, from Hart's personal papers kept in the archive of BMAG.
- xxii R.A.G. Carson, *A History of the Royal Numismatic Society, 1936-1986* (London, 1986), p. 19.
- xxiii Warwick Wroth, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Vandals, Ostrogoths and Lombards and of the Empires of Thessalonica, Nicaea and Trebizond in the British Museum* (London, 1911); Warwick Wroth, *Catalogue of the Imperial Byzantine Coins in the British Museum, Volume One*. 2 vols (London, 1908).
- xxiv Percy Gardner, *A History of Ancient Coinage, 700-300 B.C.* (Oxford, 1918).
- xxv Carson, op. cit. (note 21), p. 1, p. 13.
- xxvi Carson, op. cit. (note 21), p. 24.
- xxvii 'Proceedings of the Royal Numismatic Society', *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society*, Fourth Series 17 (1917), p. 5.
- xxviii J. G. Milne and C. H. V. Sutherland, 'The Evans Collection at Oxford: Sir Arthur Evans', *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society*, Sixth Series 3, no. 1/4 (1943), p. 73.
- xxix 'Proceedings of the Royal Numismatic Society', *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society*, Fifth Series 16, no. 63 (1936), p. 56.
- xxx For example, Fleur Kemmers and Nanouschka Myrberg, 'Rethinking Numismatics. The Archaeology of Coins', *Archaeological Dialogues* 18 (2011), pp. 87–p. 108, 91.
- xxxi For example, Bogdan Constantinescu, Angela Vasilescu, Martin Radtke, and Uwe Reinholz, 'Micro-SR-XRF Studies for Archaeological Gold Identification - the Case of Carpathian Gold and of Romanian Museal Objects', in *Proceedings of the 7th Conference on Nuclear and Particle Physics, 11-15 Nov. 2009, Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt* (Cairo, 2009), pp. 627–634; N. Schindel, *Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum Israel; the Sasanian and Sasanian-Type Coins in the Collections of the Hebrew University (Jerusalem)* (Vienna, 2009); T. Gerassimof, 'Byzantinische Goldmünzen Mit Graphiten', *Byzantino-Bulgarica*, (2978), pp. 123–46.
- xxxii Thinking specifically of the example of medieval manuscripts: Karl Heidecker, Karl. 2009. 'Urkunden Schreiben Im Alemannischen Umfeld Des Klosters St. Gallen', in Peter Erhart, Karl Heidecker and Bernhard Zeller (eds.), *Die Privaturkunden Der Karolingerzeit* (Zürich, 2009), pp. 183–92; Anthony Kaldellis, Anthony, 'The Byzantine Role in the Making of the Corpus of Classical Greek Historiography: A Preliminary Investigation', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 132 (2012), pp. 71–85; Helmut Reimitz, 'Social Networks and Identities in Frankish Historiography: New Aspects of the Textual History of Gregory of Tours' *Historiae* in Richard Corradini, Max Diesenberger, and Helmut Reimitz (eds.), *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages: Texts, Resources and Artefacts* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 229–68; Elina Screen and Charles West, 'The Written Word in Early Medieval Europe: The View from the Manuscripts', in Elina Screen and Charles West (eds.) *Writing the Early Medieval West: Studies in Honour of Rosamond McKitterick* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 113–14. For the material turn and biographies of objects more widely: A. Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge, 1986); Barry Finbarr Flood, 'Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum', *The Art Bulletin* 84.4 (2002), pp. 641–659; Beverley Lemire, Beverley, 'Draping the Body and Dressing the Home: The Material Culture of Textiles and Clothes in the Atlantic World, c. 1500-1800', in Karen Harvey (ed.) *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London, 2009), pp. 85–102.
- xxxiii Colin Haselgrove and Stefan Krmnicek, 'The Archaeology of Money', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012), pp. 235–250, p. 237.
- xxxiv This trajectory is visible in a comparison of: Robert Göbl, Robert, *Sasanian Numismatics* (Braunschweig, 1971), and Rika Gyselen, *La Géographie Administrative de l'empire Sassanide. Les Témoignages Sigillographiques* (Paris, 1989).
- xxxv Currently, the clearest systematic effort to evaluate the way in which collections differ from stray finds in the UK is Peter D. Spencer, 'The Construction of Histories: Numismatics and Metal Detecting', in Suzie Thomas and Peter G. Stone (eds.) *Metal Detecting and Archaeology* (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 125–36.
- xxxvi For the scope of this debate see, for example: Denis Byrne, *Counterheritage: Critical Perspectives on Heritage Conservation in Asia* (Hoboken, NJ, 2014); N. Brodie and C. Renfrew, 'Looting and the World's Archaeological



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Heritage: The Inadequate Response', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34 (2005), pp. 343–361; Catherine Sease, 'Conservation and the Antiquities Trade', *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 36.1 (1997), pp. 49–58; Staffan Lundén, 'Perspectives on Looting, the Illicit Antiquities Trade, Art and Heritage', *Art, Antiquity and Law* 17.2 (2012), pp. 109–34.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> This mix is clear in the annual publication of the *Numismatic Chronicle*, which consistently includes articles by collectors and dealers alongside academic authors, as well as in collections such as Thomas and Stone, op. cit. (note 34) and Rory Naismith, Martin Allen, and Elina Screen (eds.) 2014. *Early Medieval Monetary History: Studies in Memory of Mark Blackburn*, (Farnham, 2014). It is also visible from the list of presenters at the meetings of the International Numismatic Congress, for example: M. Caccamo Caltabiano, B. Carroccio, D. Castrizio, M. Puglisi and G. Salamone, (eds.), *XV International Numismatic Congress Taormina 2015 Proceedings*. 2 vols (Rome, 2017).